

## IN THE CLAIMS:

Please rewrite claims 1 and 19 and cancel non-elected claims 10 to 18 without prejudice or disclaimer, all as follows:

1. (currently and previously amended) A method for forming an elongated fused quartz article comprising:

feeding a generally SiO<sub>2</sub> material into a furnace melting zone comprising a refractory material wall with a protective lining selected from the group consisting of rhenium, osmium, iridium[, platinum] and mixtures thereof;

fusing said SiO<sub>2</sub> material in the melting zone of said furnace under a gas atmosphere within said zone comprising at least one carrier gas [and an] enhanced with an added oxidizing gas; and

drawing the fused SiO<sub>2</sub> material from the furnace to form said article.

2. (canceled)

3. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein said carrier gas is hydrogen or a noble gas.

4. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein said oxidizing gas is water vapor.

5. (original) The method of claim 1 being a continuous process.

6. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein said article is a tube.

7. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein said article is a rod.

8. (previously amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said refractory material is comprised of tungsten, molybdenum or mixtures thereof.

9. (previously amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said protective lining material comprises rhenium.

10. (canceled)

11. (canceled)

12. (canceled)

13. (canceled)

14. (canceled)

15. (canceled)

16. (canceled)

17. (canceled)

18. (canceled)

19. (previously added and currently amended) A method for forming an elongated article, comprising:

feeding a generally  $\text{SiO}_2$  material into a furnace melting zone comprising a refractory material wall having a protective lining;

fusing said  $\text{SiO}_2$  material in the melting zone under a gas atmosphere within said zone comprising at least one carrier gas enhanced with an added oxidizing gas; and

drawing the fused  $\text{SiO}_2$  material from the furnace to form the elongated article.